

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 151805Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2791
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMCONSUL TRIESTE POUCH
AMCONSUL TURIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJ: HURDLES ON THE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL CALENDAR

REF: ROME 1163

SUMMARY: OVER THE NEXT MONTH, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL
LEADERS FACE A NUMBER OF HURDLES WHICH COULD SORELY
TEST THE POLITICAL CONSENSUS. PERHAPS THE MOST IMMEDIATE
POLITICAL PROBLEM IS THAT OF SELECTING A REPLACEMENT FOR
INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA (DC CHAMBER WHIP PICCOLI
SEEMS TO BE A RELUCTANT CANDIDATE) WITHOUT SETTING IN
MOTION A DESTABILIZING SQUABBLE OF MUSICAL CHAIRS
WITHIN THE DC. ANDREOTTI IS EXPECTED TO CONSULT THE
PARTIES OF THE LEGISLATIVE MAJORITY THIS WEEK BUT DEFER
A DECISION UNTIL AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE
MORO CASE WHICH BEGINS MAY 18. EARLIER, THE GOVERNMENT
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WILL SEEK A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE (MAY 16 OR 17) AS AN
EXPEDIENT TO OVERCOME RADICAL PARTY OBSTRUCTION TO THE
ENACTMENT OF THE ANTI-TERRORISM DECREE LAWS. TIME IS
ALSO RUNNING PRECARIOUSLY SHORT FOR THE PASSAGE OF ABORTION
LEGISLATION AND AMENDMENT OF THE REALE LAW
ON PUBLIC ORDER IN TIME TO AVOID THEIR PTENTIALLY
DIVISIVE INCLUSION IN THE PUBLIC REFERENDUM SCHEDULED

FOR JUNE 11. THESE SENSITIVE ISSUES WILL BE PLAYED OUT AGAINST THE BACK DROP OF THE MAY/JUNE LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AND THE INEVITABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND MANEUVERING OF THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE NEW POST-MORO SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

1. SELECTING A NEW INTERIOR MINISTER: PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI IS EXPECTED TO CONSULT THE PARTIES THAT SUPPORT HIS GOVERNMENT ON THE MORO CASE BEFORE THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE BEGINS ON MAY 18. IN ADDITION TO THE GOI'S HANDLING OF THE CASE, THE QUESTION OF A SUCCESSOR TO INTERIOR MINISTER COSSIGA WILL ALSO LIKELY ARISE. THE PORTFOLIO IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AND POLITICALLY SENSITIVE IN THE GOVERNMENT. THE PCI HAS SUPPORTED REPUBLICAN AND SOCIAL DEMOCRAT DEMANDS TO TAKE UP THE MATTER IN A "COLLEGIAL" MEETING OF THE FIVE PARTY SECRETARIES WITH ANDREOTTI. IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT ANDREOTTI WILL CONSULT THE PARTIES INDIVIDUALLY, AND FORMALLY, AT LEAST, ON THE GENERAL ISSUES OF THE MORO CASE. HE WILL PROBABLY DO THIS ON MAY 17, BUT DEFER A DECISION ON COSSIGA'S SUCCESSOR UNTIL AFTER THE DEBATE, SOMETIME NEXT WEEK.

2. WITH TERRORISM THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE, THE INTERIOR JOB IS POLITICALLY RISKY. WE KNOW OF NO SELF-PROMOTED CANDIDATES FOR THE TASK. BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL FOR UPSETTING THE EXISTING DELICATE DC FACTIONAL BALANCE IN THE CABINET, IT APPEARS LESS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LIKELY THAT COSSIGA WILL BE REPLACED BY A CURRENT MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT (SUCH AS DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI). SPECULATION HAS CENTERED ON DC CHAMBER WHIP PICCOLI (DOROTEO LEADER) AND DC SENATE WHIP BARTOLOMEI (FANFANIANO), WITH PICCOLI THOUGHT TO BE THE RELUCTANT FRONT-RUNNER AT THE MOMENT.

3. VOTE OF CONFIDENCE ON ANTI-TERRORISM LAW: THE GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL SEEK A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE ON THE ENACTMENT OF THE ANTI-TERRORISM DECREE LAW AS AN EXPEDIENT TO BREAK UP AN MSI AND RADICAL PARTY LOGJAM OF 2000 OBSTRUCTIONIST AMENDMENTS THAT COULD KILL THE PROVISION OF NOT PASSED BEFORE MAY 20. THE EMERGENCY PUBLIC ORDER MEASURE (WHICH INCLUDES INCREASED PENALTIES FOR POLITICAL KIDNAPPING) WERE DECREED ON MARCH 21 AFTER MORO'S KIDNAPPING (ROME 5376). BY FORCING A VOTE (WHICH WILL PROBABLY TAKE PLACE ON MAY 16 OR 17), THE CHAMBER WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO GET ON WITH OTHER BUSINESS IN ADDITION TO SAVING THE MEASURE.

4. AVOIDING POLITICAL DIVISIVE REFERENDA: AS PART OF

THE POLITICAL UNDERSTANDING ON THE FORMATION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT, THE PARTIES AGREED TO ENACT LEGISLATION WHICH WOULD OBVIATE THE NEED FOR REFERENDA SUPPORTED BY THE RADICAL PARTY ON ALL BUT THE QUESTION OF PUBLIC FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES. IN ORDER TO DO SO, ACTION MUST BE COMPLETED BEFORE THE JUNE 11 SCHEDULED DATE OF THE REFERENDUM. ACTION HAS BEEN TAKEN ON THE RELATIVELY MINOR QUESTION: INSANE ASYLUM REFORM AND THE LAW ON COMMISSIONS OF INQUIRY FOR HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. TIME IS INCREASINGLY RUNNING OUT, HOWEVER, FOR ACTION ON THE REALE LAW (EMERGENCY PUBLIC ORDER POWERS) AND THE ABORTION BILL, WHICH BOTH THE DC AND PCI WISH TO AVOID AS POLITICALLY DEVISIVE.

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5. THE ABORTION BILL (PASSED BY THE CHAMBER) OVERCAME A MAJOR LEGISLATIVE HURDLE LAST WEEK WHEN THE SENATE VOTED 162 TO 150 AGAINST "THE NON-PASSAGE TO VOTING ON THE ARTICLES," THE DC-SUPPORTED MOTION WHICH KILLED THE BILL A YEAR AGO. THE SENATE MUST NOW VOTE ON THE INDIVIDUAL ARTICLES IN ADDITION TO 114 DC AND MSI AMENDMENTS. SHOULD ANY OF THE ARTICLES BE VOTED DOWN OR AMENDMENTS PASSED, THE ENTIRE BILL WOULD HAVE TO BE RETURNED TO THE CHAMBER FOR RECONSIDERATION. GOOD ATTENDANCE AND CONSIDERABLE CARE WILL BE NEEDED IF THE ABORTION BILL IS TO BE PASSED IN TIME TO AVOID A REFERENDUM.

6. AVOIDANCE OF A REFERENDUM TO REPEAL THE REALE LAW ON PUBLIC ORDER APPEARS MUCH MORE PROBLEMATIC. PASSED BY THE SENATE, THE AMENDED LAW IS CURRENTLY BEING DISCUSSED IN THE CHAMBER. IT IS ENCUMBERED, HOWEVER, BY OVER 4000 MSI AND RADICAL PARTY OBSTRUCTIONIST AMENDMENTS, WHICH EVEN IF GROUPED TOGETHER, WILL BE DIFFICULT TO DISPOSE OF EXPENDITIOUSLY. IN ADDITION, THERE IS SUPPORT FOR A DC AMENDMENT WHICH WOULD PRECLUDE PROVISIONAL LIBERTY FOR CERTAIN SERIOUS CRIMES, AND WHICH WOULD RETURN THE WHOLE BILL TO THE SENATE IF PASSED.

7. FINALLY, THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT MET ON MAY 15 TO DECIDE WHETHER A REFERENDUM CAN BE ABROGATED SIMPLY BY THE PASSAGE OF A NEW LAW (THE TACTIC OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY). THE COURT WILL HAVE TO RULE WHETHER THE NEW LAW MUST ALSO CHANGE THE EXISTING SITUATION IN THE DIRECTION SOUGHT BY THE REFERENDUM PETITIONERS. IN THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC'S BRIEF EXPERIENCE WITH REFENDA, THIS QUESTION HAS NOT

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BEEN CONSTITUTIONALLY RAISED UNTIL NOW. GARDNER

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